facing a threat of serious disease which has been affecting their coconut trees for the last many decades resulting in the loss of the yielo;

(b) whether Government have done anything so far to save these growers; if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the reasons for not giving much importance to R&D in the agricultural sector?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Government of India through Coconut Development Board is providing assistance for the uprooting of root wilt affected palms replanting and rehabilitating less affected gardens. So far Rs. 25.296 crore has been released to the State of Kerala during the 8th Plan. The Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI) of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is imple-menting a major research programme to find causes and control of the disease. CPCRI has recently identified root wilt-tolerant mother tree and has started producing disease tolerant planting material since 1995-96 for which a revolving fund scheme at a cost of Rs. 33 lakh has also been sanctioned.

Growth of agriculture during Eighth Plan

13. DR. BB DUTTA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the annual plan target set for the growth of agriculture during the Eighth Five Year Plan;

(b) how far these targets have been achieved;

(c) the reasons for low growth during 1995-96;

(d) the prospects for 1996-97 so far as agricultural growth is concerned; and

(e) the details of measures taken by Government to accelerate the growth of agriculture?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA): (a) and (b) As against the target set for the growth of agriculture during the Eighth Five Year Plan at 3.1 per cent per annum, the average growth achievement of agriculture and allied sectors in terms of gross domestic product at constant prices is observed provisionally at 3.6 per cent per annum.

(c) The low growth in agriculture sector during 1995-96 was attributed to fall in crop production, particularly foodgrains, on account of unfavourable weather conditions, low consumption of fertilizer in rabi season, etc.

(d) As per the current assessment made, the growth in agriculture and allied sectors is expected to be around 3.7 per cent for 1996-97.

(e) The Government is implementing various crop specific and sector specific development programmes to accelerate the growth in agriculture and allied sectors besides providing market and price support.

Production of groundnut

14. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the States producing groundnut and the annual production of groundnut in these States during the last three years, year-wise and State-wise;

(b) whether the production of groundnut has declined during the current financial year;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the details of steps taken to assist the groundnut growers for increasing the production thereof?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA): (a) The major groundnut producing States are Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. The Annual Production of groundnut in these States during the last three years is given in statement, *(see* below)

(b) and (c) The production of groundnut during the current financial year i.e. 1996-97 is estimated to be 91.2 lakh tonnes which is an all time high production of groundnut during the last three years.

(d) In order to increase the production of groundnut including other oilseeds, a Centrally Sponsored Oilseeds Production Programme (OPP) is in operation in 22 States. The programme provides financial assistance for various critical inputs like production and distribution of seeds, distribution of minikits,